

# Influential Advertising

Have you ever stopped to think how many places you see advertisements for products to buy, places to visit, or movies to see? Sure, there are plenty of commercials interrupting your favorite TV shows, but you probably don't realize how many other ads you see. Advertising is everywhere, on posters, in our mail, on the Internet, even on the sides of busses.

But how does advertising influence us? For one thing, ads make certain products very familiar by showing them to us again and again. For example, there are many brands of soda on the shelves, but if you ask people to name the first two brands that come to mind, 90 percent of them will say Coke and Pepsi, in either order. Why? Because those two companies have spent the most money putting their products in front of us for many years.

Advertisers also influence how we think by giving us reasons to buy their products. For example, an ad's message may be that if you buy a certain product you will look better, smell better, be more fashionable, be more popular, have less to worry about, or have more fun. This may or may not be true, but if the ad makes you think that the product will be good for you in some way, then it has influenced you.



Advertising abounds on this busy street corner.

Sometimes advertising can influence us in positive ways. You might learn about new foods that are healthy or about new timesaving technology. You could discover a great place to go on vacation or be influenced to give money to the Red Cross.

Advertising also influences people in negative ways. Beer commercials have led many teens to think it's okay to start drinking alcohol, which is both illegal and dangerous. Advertising also influences people to buy things that they don't really need and cannot afford.

Companies need to advertise to let us know about their products and services. However, we need to make smart decisions and not be influenced too easily by the commercials and print ads we see every day. ■